



### Promotional Event Ideas and Publicity Tips

**National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month (Recovery Month)** offers the opportunity to celebrate those in long-term recovery and encourage others to seek treatment. You can bring **Recovery Month** to life in your community by organizing special events in September to promote treatment and recovery from substance use disorders. You can use them to attract attention and support from the community, including legislators, business leaders, and the media.

**Theme Pointers:** The **Recovery Month** theme, **“Join the Voices for Recovery: Real People, Real Recovery,”** is the unifying force behind the entire 2008 **Recovery Month** campaign. This theme emphasizes the value that treatment of substance use disorders has on individuals, their families, and the community. Ensure that the theme is prominently displayed on event materials, highlighted in any pre-event media outreach, and mentioned throughout the event.

### The 19<sup>th</sup> Annual **Recovery Month** Will:

- Celebrate people in long-term recovery and showcase how it empowers, motivates, and gives everyone a renewed outlook on life
  - Educate community members about substance use disorders, the effectiveness of treatment, and the realistic possibility of recovery
  - Stress that substance use disorders are chronic diseases and should be treated as such
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- Emphasize that individualized treatment helps people on a road to recovery

You can spread these messages by planning community roundtables, media events, and other promotional activities that will attract a wide, diverse audience. **Recovery Month** Webcasts are available to play at local events. These educational multimedia tools raise awareness about the diverse issues that affect people in long-term recovery. Webcasts can be obtained by visiting [www.recoverymonth.gov](http://www.recoverymonth.gov) and clicking on the “Multimedia” tab.

### Snapshots of Successful **Recovery Month** Events

**Recovery Month** events have brought together communities across the country. Many organizers learn from each other how to effectively raise awareness about substance use disorders and celebrate people in long-term recovery. Ideas and examples are available on the **Recovery Month** Web site at [www.recoverymonth.gov](http://www.recoverymonth.gov). The following are just a few events held in **Recovery Month** 2007:

- The 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Block Party, Music, and Art Festival, held in Los Angeles, CA, was the oldest recovery festival in Los Angeles County. It was started by the residents of the Beacon House Association of San Pedro, a residential treatment program for men. The two-day festival included live entertainment, music, dancing, food, games, prizes, and more. Admission was free and the event encouraged family participation. Approximately 3,000 members of the community attended.
- Recovering Ourselves to Win, a medium-sized event held in Georgia and sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), was a community awareness event that featured information



distribution, giveaways, and drumming performances for recovery. The event was held in conjunction with the Atlanta Hong Kong Dragon Boat Festival and led by the Georgia Asian Pacific Islander Community Coalition.

- **Recovery Month** events do not have to be large to thrive. The Substance Abuse and Addiction Recovery Alliance (SAARA) of Central Virginia held a forum—with approximately 60 people in attendance—on the “Stigma of Addictions.” The event cost \$20, which included a 1-year membership to SAARA. All proceeds went to support the SAARA Recovery Assistance Fund.

## Nine Tips for Successful Event Planning

1. **Streamline your event**, keeping in mind the audience and theme. Examples of successful events include runs/walks, family picnics, luncheons, and community roundtables.
2. **Organize a comprehensive participant and speaker list**. Remember to provide confirmed speakers with an agenda and time limit for their remarks, instructing them to keep their speeches brief. If possible, obtain copies of their remarks ahead of time to ensure that many perspectives are showcased and no topic is repeated.
3. **Set your event date around other *Recovery Month* activities** so you can strengthen and collaborate with the activities of other organizations. Cross-check your events with others, locally and nationwide, on the *Recovery Month* Web site at [www.recoverymonth.gov](http://www.recoverymonth.gov) by clicking on the “Community Events” link. You also can look at the calendar of events listed by SAMHSA’s Health Information Network (SHIN) at [www.SAMHSA.gov/calendar/calendar.aspx](http://www.SAMHSA.gov/calendar/calendar.aspx). Post your event information on the *Recovery Month* Web site at [www.recoverymonth.gov](http://www.recoverymonth.gov) to increase exposure.
4. **Be accessible** and choose a location that will easily accommodate members of the media and those with special needs. Examples include public parks or buildings, or open spaces at treatment or recovery support centers. To maximize photo opportunities, make sure your location is visually appealing and can be identified without trouble.
5. **Secure a back-up venue**, especially if your event is taking place outdoors. Make sure to include the rain date and/or alternative locations in your correspondence with attendees, speakers, moderators, and the media. If this is not possible, make sure you communicate that the event will take place rain or shine.
6. **Plan for a back-up speaker**, in case your keynote speaker becomes sick or has a last-minute scheduling conflict.
7. **Create a “run of show,”** or schedule, for your event to share with the speakers, moderators, and other participants. Ask that they arrive at least a half-hour early and designate a private space where they can prepare.

8. **Plan for media interviews** by ensuring that each speaker has a firm grasp of your organization’s talking points—a list of points created by the organization to convey a coherent and unified message. For *Recovery Month* talking points, you can refer to the “Media Tips” document in this planning toolkit.
9. **Check all audiovisual equipment** an hour before your event to make certain it’s working properly, in the correct place, and that those in charge know how to use it.

## One Example—Plan a Run/Walk Event

An excellent family-oriented method to celebrate people in long-term recovery and their supporters is to host a run/walk event. This event can include appearances and speeches by local officials and people in long-term recovery. Below are some tips to organize a successful run/walk event:

- Sit down with key people to get things going. You might consider partnering with other organizations or a media outlet to use all available resources.
- Set a date—rain or shine. Choose a starting time and determine the length and route of the race.
- Decide how many participants your staff can realistically handle. An event with several thousand runners or walkers is vastly different than one with several hundred. The more participants, the more spectators come to watch. Be sure to recruit volunteers to help with crowd control and other race day activities.
- Set a registration fee, if needed, to help offset costs and raise money. You can either make participation in the event completely free of charge or offer the opportunity to fundraise for a local treatment center.
- Hold a planning meeting to establish procedures and discuss policies for registration, media and publicity, volunteers, safety, traffic management, first aid, and other services such as food, restrooms, accommodations, cleanup, and entertainment.
- Approach potential sponsors to help finance and add name recognition to the event. Contact an athletic or sporting-goods store, a running club, and/or local foundations and businesses that support healthy lifestyles. Solicit corporate donations for water, energy bars, other snacks, and sports drinks to be handed out along the route and at the finish line. Sponsors will likely want to promote their products with giveaways such as T-shirts, caps, and water bottles.
- Work with law enforcement agencies to address local ordinances, road closures, traffic barricades, crowd control, and security issues.
- Licenses and permits may be required for street closures or large gatherings in public places. Law enforcement also should be able to help you secure these.
- Spread the word to as many people as possible. Use the media relations strategies on the next page to publicize your event.



### How to Get Media Attention

For your **Recovery Month** events to reach the widest possible audience, consider spending a portion of your planning time on media outreach. When inviting the media, include all outlets, such as local broadcast (television and radio) and Internet outlets, along with newspaper reporters. Broadcast outlets may air your activities in their entirety—either live or taped. Consider Webcasting your event through your organization's Web site to reach a larger group.

**Newsworthy activities** that may attract community media attention include:

- Athletic events such as a run/walk to celebrate recovery (more details on how to plan a run/walk can be found on page 3)
- Fundraisers or award presentations that honor those who are making a difference in the fight against substance use disorders
- Family picnics and concerts that bring people together
- The opening of a new treatment or recovery support center
- The creation or expansion of a K-12 student assistance program in the local school district for children who have parents with substance use disorders
- A roundtable where community members can express and address concerns and learn from local officials and experts about recovery
- The announcement of a new or expanded support program for people to reclaim their lives through long-term recovery
- A speech and issuance of a proclamation by a local or state government official with a photo opportunity during the signing

**Media Coverage Fact:** There are certain basics to planning an event that will likely attract more media attention. This can include involving prominent community figures, distributing useful materials, alerting the media in advance, and following up often.

**Involving local celebrities or prominent figures** from the community also should attract media attention. Plan ahead by creating a roster of influential speakers and, before inviting them, research who would have the most compelling story to share. Participants who might draw media attention include:

- People in long-term recovery or affected by a loved one's substance use
- Citizens who have assisted others in their quest for recovery
- Members of Congress
- State legislators
- City council members
- Mayors
- Governors
- Well-known community leaders

**Event Publicity Pointers:** Select a location that is easily accessible to participants and members of the media. Send local reporters a media advisory in advance of the event and send your press release the morning of the event. Monitor media coverage by collecting news clips and checking with the publications to obtain their permission to distribute the clips to the public through your Web site or newsletter. Additional information about working with the media can be found in other sections of this toolkit.

Start the event with a person in long-term recovery saying a few words of introduction. This year's **Recovery Month** theme, *"Join the Voices for Recovery: Real People, Real Recovery,"* emphasizes the importance of real people telling their stories of long-term recovery and the positive impact it had on their lives. If people in recovery speak at your event, they can share their experiences without violating the "anonymity" clauses of some mutual support groups. Many of these groups encourage members to share their stories as long as their membership in that particular group is not disclosed. As part of your planning process, let speakers know in advance if media will be invited so they can preserve their anonymity. Be sure to inform the media about the traditions of anonymity.

**By providing members of the media with comprehensive and accurate information** about recovery, your event, and your organization, you can help them develop a more well-rounded story. Samples of materials are included in this planning toolkit, along with tips for speaking with the media. Materials to distribute should include:

- Media advisory and news release
- Speaker biographies and photos
- Fact sheets about substance use disorders, **Recovery Month**, and your organization
- Proclamations issued in observance of **Recovery Month**
- Contact information for a spokesperson in your organization who can respond to media inquiries



**Invite local media.** Send a media advisory to reporters before the event and fax or e-mail a news release the morning of it. Templates for both documents and tips on how to identify proper contacts are included in this planning toolkit. Many television affiliates have an online calendar of local events that community members find valuable, so you could post your event details in advance.

**Follow up with the media.** At the event's conclusion, you should allow time for a question-and-answer session and encourage reporters to interview the featured speakers. Also, in the days following the event, call or e-mail reporters to ask if they need additional information or have any further questions, unless they have asked not to be contacted afterward. Finally, be sure to send a thank-you note to those who spoke at your event.

**Check for media coverage** in the days and weeks following the event. For future use in promotional materials, collect news clippings that mention your event. Before distributing any clips on your Web site or to members of your organization, check with the media outlet and the author to obtain their permissions. Please send samples of your media materials and clips to SAMHSA's Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT) using the address included at the end of this document. Your materials help us compile valuable information about the kinds of tools your organizations need in future years, as well as gauge the success of the campaign.

## Other Activities that Will Spread *Recovery Month* Messages

The following is a list of additional activities, events, and promotional ideas that can work on their own or as a supplement to the events mentioned earlier in this document. Selecting a variety of these activities will make your campaign comprehensive and cohesive.

**Articles** – Write a short article illustrating the advantages of treating substance use disorders and the importance of recognizing those in long-term recovery and their families. Include a Web site or telephone number where people can find more information—or locate a treatment or recovery support center. Use this article as part of your media outreach for your *Recovery Month* events and post it on your Web site. For more tips on writing and disseminating articles for *Recovery Month*, please refer to the document titled “Writing and Submitting an Op-Ed” in the “Media Outreach” section of this planning toolkit.

**Athletic Activities** – Work with schools, teams, and coaches at the high school or college level to educate students about the dangers of steroids and other illegal—or legal—performance-enhancing substances. Some *Recovery Month* activities have been staged at amateur, semi-professional, or professional sporting events. Coordinate a run/walk, marathon, sports tournament, or similar event that encourages a healthy lifestyle.

**Banners/Ads** – Place banners or advertisements promoting September as *Recovery Month* in your community's most visible areas, such as popular parks, intersections, lobbies of busy office buildings or shops, outdoor billboards, and public transportation signs. Keep in mind that advertising costs may be associated with prominent displays. You also can add an electronic image of *Recovery Month* to your organization's Web site and link to the *Recovery Month* Web site by downloading a banner at [www.recoverymonth.gov](http://www.recoverymonth.gov).

**Exhibit Booths and Health Fairs** – Set up a booth at a local hospital, community center, festival, health fair, or wellness event to disseminate pamphlets about effective treatment options and related subjects. If you are looking for more active participation, coordinate with other organizations to sponsor a health fair that addresses multiple health issues. Be sure to solicit booths by local treatment centers, mutual support groups, faith-based organizations, and other service organizations that can offer information about how they assist members of your community. Encourage families and children to attend the fair by offering health-related games and giveaways. SHIN has many helpful hand-out materials for these types of events. To order materials, call 1-800-662-HELP or visit the Web site at [www.SAMHSA.gov/SHIN](http://www.SAMHSA.gov/SHIN).

**High School Assemblies** – Coordinate with principals and counselors at local high schools to organize assemblies that discuss substance use disorders, warning signs, the difficulties of living with a person with these disorders, and the hope and effectiveness of treatment. Educate students about how long-term recovery can restore the health of the individual, family, friends, and the community, and how it can give people a renewed outlook on life. Explain that there are effective treatment options specifically designed for young people and support programs for youths living with family members with substance use disorders. Invite teens in recovery to share personal anecdotes at assemblies, but first consult each school's and district's guidelines regarding the sharing of sensitive and personal information by the students and, if the youth is a minor, obtain parent and/or guardian consent.

**High School or Local College Essay Contest** – Work with social workers, advisors, or counselors to have students submit essays about the impact of long-term recovery on their lives, either through their own experiences or that of a person close to them. Establish criteria for judging the entries and reward winners with a scholarship to further their education.

**Media Sponsorships** – Ask local media outlets to sponsor your *Recovery Month* event by featuring their logo on your promotional materials. A media sponsorship enhances the credibility of your event by showing local support and also can help increase media coverage. Typically, only one media outlet will sponsor your event; however, the sponsorship of the event will raise the profile of your program and will make it more likely that other outlets will cover the event.

**Radio Outreach** – Coordinate with a local radio DJ, public affairs director, or station manager to promote your *Recovery Month* event and mention key messages about your organization on the air. You also can distribute the live-read radio public service announcement (PSA) scripts included in this planning toolkit. Radio is an important and powerful tool because most stations appeal to specific audiences. By marketing your event to a specific population, you are taking advantage of a great opportunity to interest different groups in your event. Lastly, you can order pre-recorded radio PSAs to disseminate to local radio outlets by e-mailing [recoverymonth@iqsolutions.com](mailto:recoverymonth@iqsolutions.com) or calling 240-221-4361. Open-ended television and radio PSAs are available to tailor to your local community.

**Recovery Weekend** – Reach out to faith leaders and clergy for a "Recovery Weekend." This is an opportunity for religious leaders of all denominations to make recovery part of their sermons/homilies. Discuss the importance of early intervention, treatment, and recovery and how it can have an influence on individuals, family members, religious organizations, and the entire community. Faith leaders can help their congregations better understand substance use disorders and dispel many myths and stigmas associated with recovery. They can provide materials for congregants in need of help, using pamphlets and posters that are available at [www.SAMHSA.gov/SHIN](http://www.SAMHSA.gov/SHIN). Invite clergy in long-term recovery to share their stories, if possible.





**Webcasts – *Recovery Month*** Webcasts are available to download or order by visiting [www.recoverymonth.gov](http://www.recoverymonth.gov) and clicking on the “Multimedia” tab. These informative programs can be played at *Recovery Month* events to educate people on the different issues surrounding substance use disorders.

**Workplace Partnerships –** Urge local employers to promote *Recovery Month* to their employees. Ask them to display *Recovery Month* posters in high-traffic areas. Employers can host seminars that discuss programs and assistance offered by their company to their employees in need of treatment or recovery support and their family members. Employers also can have their insurance providers present about the benefits available to employees or have a physician talk about the effects of addiction on the individual and family.

Make sure that for all planned activities, your materials include phone numbers, e-mail addresses, and Web sites where people can get additional information regarding treatment programs and recovery services.

### Share Your Activities and Successes

**Share** your *Recovery Month* plans and activities with SAMHSA and the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT), along with the general public. Post them on [www.recoverymonth.gov](http://www.recoverymonth.gov) to generate momentum for the campaign, which will touch millions of people who are affected by substance use disorders.

**Share** community success stories and other outreach efforts during *Recovery Month* by completing the “Customer Satisfaction Form” in this planning toolkit. Instructions are included on the form.

**Share** samples of your organization’s *Recovery Month* promotional materials with:

Office of the Director, Consumer Affairs  
SAMHSA’s Center for Substance Abuse Treatment  
1 Choke Cherry Road, Second Floor  
Rockville, MD 20857

### About *Recovery Month* and Substance Use Disorders

- **Sample materials** from this kit are available electronically at the *Recovery Month* Web site at [www.recoverymonth.gov](http://www.recoverymonth.gov).
- **For additional *Recovery Month* information**, visit the Web site or call 1-800-662-HELP.
- **Substance use disorder, treatment, and recovery information** is available at SAMHSA’s Web site at [www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov).
- **Information on treatment options in your area** and the special services available can be found at [www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov](http://www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov), a searchable database of more than 11,000 U.S. treatment facilities.